

REMARKS

Claims 1-38 are pending in this application. Claims 1-30 are originally filed and claims 31-38 have been added herein. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the claims in view of the following remarks.

The specification has been amended herein to more consistent with the drawings. In particular, as described in paragraph [0013] and shown in Figure 2, the dielectric layer 204 is grown on substrate 202 and the gate electrode 206 is formed on the oxide layer. No new matter is added.

Claims 1-10 and 21-26 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirai (U.S. Patent No. 4,904,946) in view of Bognar (U.S. Patent No. 5,150,059). In addition, claims 11-20 and 27-30 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirai and Bognar in view of Amersekera (U.S. Patent No. 5,949,694). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Claim 1, as originally filed, recites the steps of "repetitively determining an operating resistance of the test structure; and recording a critical breakdown time when the operating resistance of the test structure is equal or smaller than the critical breakdown resistance." Applicant respectfully submits that the prior art of record does not teach or suggest the limitations of claim 1.

First, Applicant finds no teaching in the prior art of "determining a critical breakdown resistance," as required in claim 1. Consequently, the prior art does not teach or suggest "recording a critical breakdown time when the operating resistance of the test structure is equal or smaller than the critical breakdown resistance." Instead, Hirai teaches that to predict a breakdown time "it is necessary to convert breakdown current densities into the breakdown time." Col. 3, lines 39-44.

Even assuming that the breakdown time in Hirai is related to the critical breakdown time of the present invention, this time is not determined in the same manner. In particular, there is no predetermined critical breakdown resistance and, therefore, a critical breakdown time cannot be recorded when the operating resistance is smaller than the predetermined breakdown resistance.

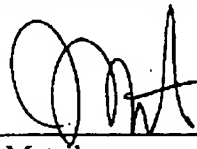
Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is allowable over the references of record.

Claims 2-30 depend from claim 1 and add further limitations. It is respectfully submitted that these dependent claims are allowable by reason of depending from an allowable claim as well as for adding further limitations.

Claims 31-38 have been added to more comprehensively claim Applicant's invention. No new matter has been added with the inclusion of these claims. Applicant respectfully submits that claims 31-38 are allowable over the references of record.

Applicant has made a diligent effort to place the claims in condition for allowance. However, should there remain unresolved issues that require adverse action, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner telephone Ira S. Matsil, Applicant's attorney at 972-732-1001 so that such issues may be resolved as expeditiously as possible.

Respectfully submitted,



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